Lili
ST. CYR

1917 - 1999

(1) Early Life

Lili St. Cyr was born Marie Schaack in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on June 3, 1917. She was raised largely by her grandparents and had two sisters, one of who (Rosemary Minsky),performed in burlesque as “Daddy Orlando.” Trained in ballet from a young age, she developed the dancer’s grace that later underpinned her highly choreographed striptease acts.

She began her professional career as a chorus line dancer at the Florentine Gardens in Hollywood, working in conventional musical and revue settings before moving toward solo nude performance.

(2) Rise as Burlesque Star

In the early 1940s she transitioned from chorine to featured stripper, initially in Los Angeles and then more prominently in Montreal, where she first became a major headliner at the Gaiety Theatre in 1944. Her club acts in Montreal and later in LA and Las Vegas quickly became famous for their theatricality: she performed reverse strips, appeared in elaborate mythological and historical tableaux, and even took bubble baths on stage as part of her routine.

By the late 1940s and through the 1950s, St. Cyr, Gypsy Rose Lee, and Ann Corio were widely regarded as the most recognized striptease acts in the United States and Canada. She was billed as the “Anatomic Bomb” and performed at high-profile venues such as Ciro’s on the Sunset Strip, where her 1947 engagement drew celebrity audiences and intense press attention.

(3) Legal Troubles & Censorship

St. Cyr’s performances frequently triggered obscenity charges and police raids, and she was arrested multiple times over the course of her career for indecent, immoral, or offensive acts.

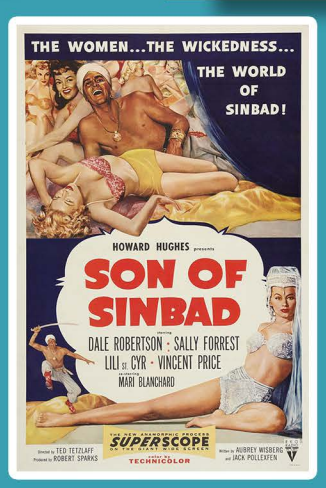
One of her most famous arrests occurred in 1951 during an engagement at Ciro’ sin Hollywood, where her show was targeted by morality crusaders and censors. Her film work also faced heavy censorship; in burlesque features directed by Irving Klaw, such as Varietease (1954), her scenes were often chopped or edited to satisfy censors, reflecting the ongoing battle between her art and public morality standards.

(4) Personal Life & Relationship

St. Cyr’s personal life was as dramatic as her stage work: she was married six times and had high-profile romances with figures such as Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, and Vic Damone. Biographical accounts describe her as a “slave to love” who suffered repeated heartbreak, attempted suicide several times after failed relationships, and struggled with sleeping-pill addiction.

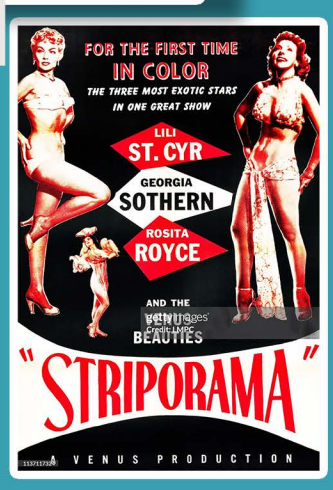
(5) Later years and Legacy

After the height of her fame in the 1940s and 1950s, St. Cyr’s career waned as burlesque itself declined and her health and personal life deteriorated. She spent much of her later life in relative seclusion in Los Angeles, her name fading from mainstream memory even as she remained a legend within burlesque circles. Lili St. Cyr died on January 29, 1999, in Los Angeles, California, at around age 81, closing the life of one of the most influential and controversial strippers of the 20th century.



Film & Other Media Work

Beyond the stage, St. Cyr appeared in several films, including Son of Sinbad (1955), where she played Zaina, and The Naked and the Dead (1958), though her mainstream acting career remained modest compared to her burlesque fame. She also featured in burlesque compilation films and short subjects, most notably the Irving Klaw productions that showcased her routines for cinema audiences. Later in life she wrote two memoirs that offered readers an intimate, self-authored account of her rise, romances, and struggles,



to Ralph
all the very best to a wonderful guy -
Lili St. Cyr
Bernard

LSC-2

to Robert,
with love —
Lili St. Cyr
John E. Reed
HOLLYWOOD

Lili St. Cyr

Lili St. Cyr

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(LA11)BEVERLY HILLS,Calif.,Dec.7--STRIPTEASER TELLS ALL ABOUT IT--Strip-teaser Lili St.Cyr uses pictures of herself in action to explain to a jury today what "true art" her work is. Lili was arrested two months ago while performing at fashionable Ciro's on the Sunset Strip. Police thought her art indecent. Later today, clothed all the time in a tailored suit, she went through her routine before the jury. She said Ciro's was paying her $1,250 a week. (AP Wirephoto)(See Story)(m61900mir 1951

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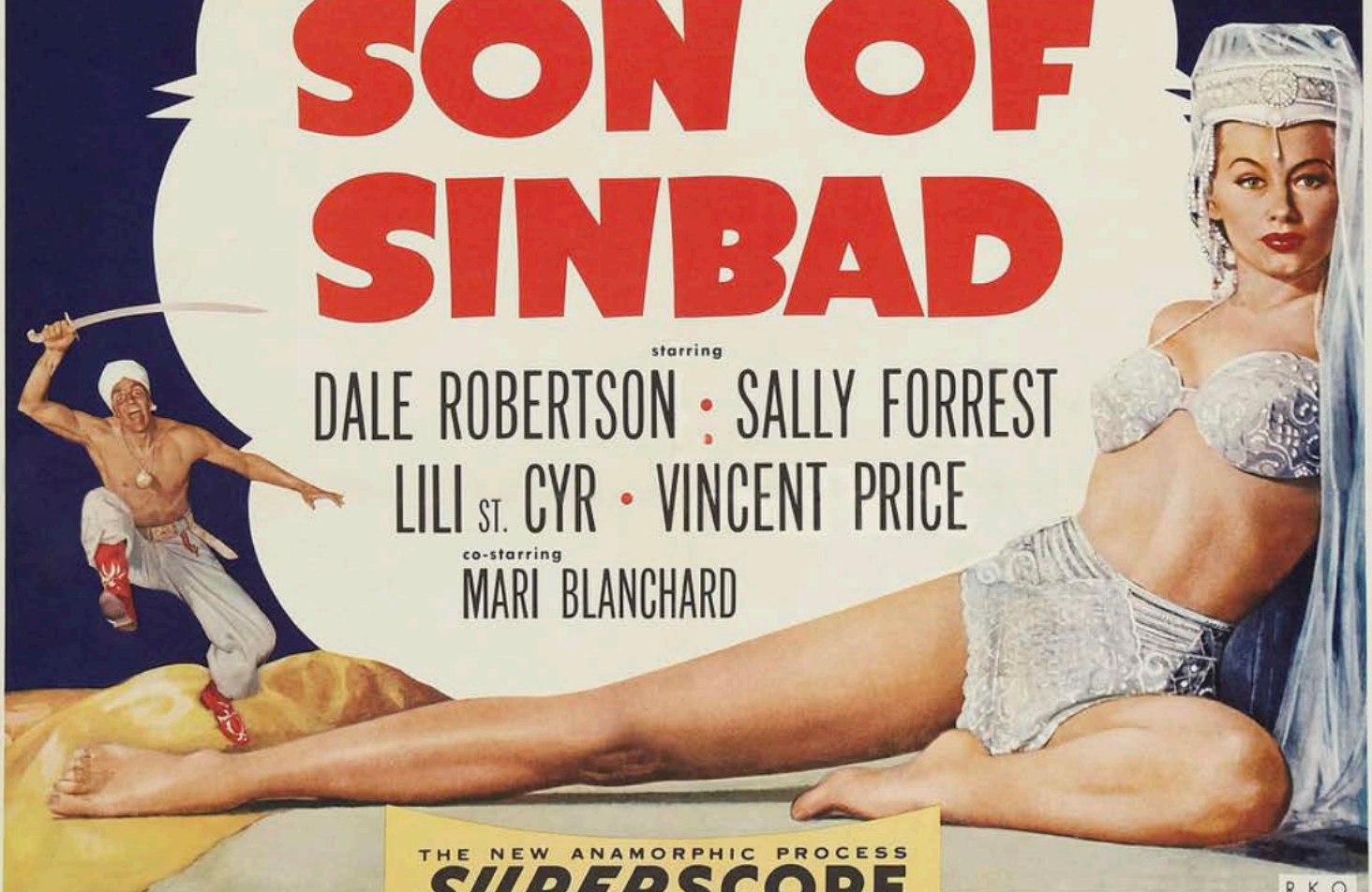

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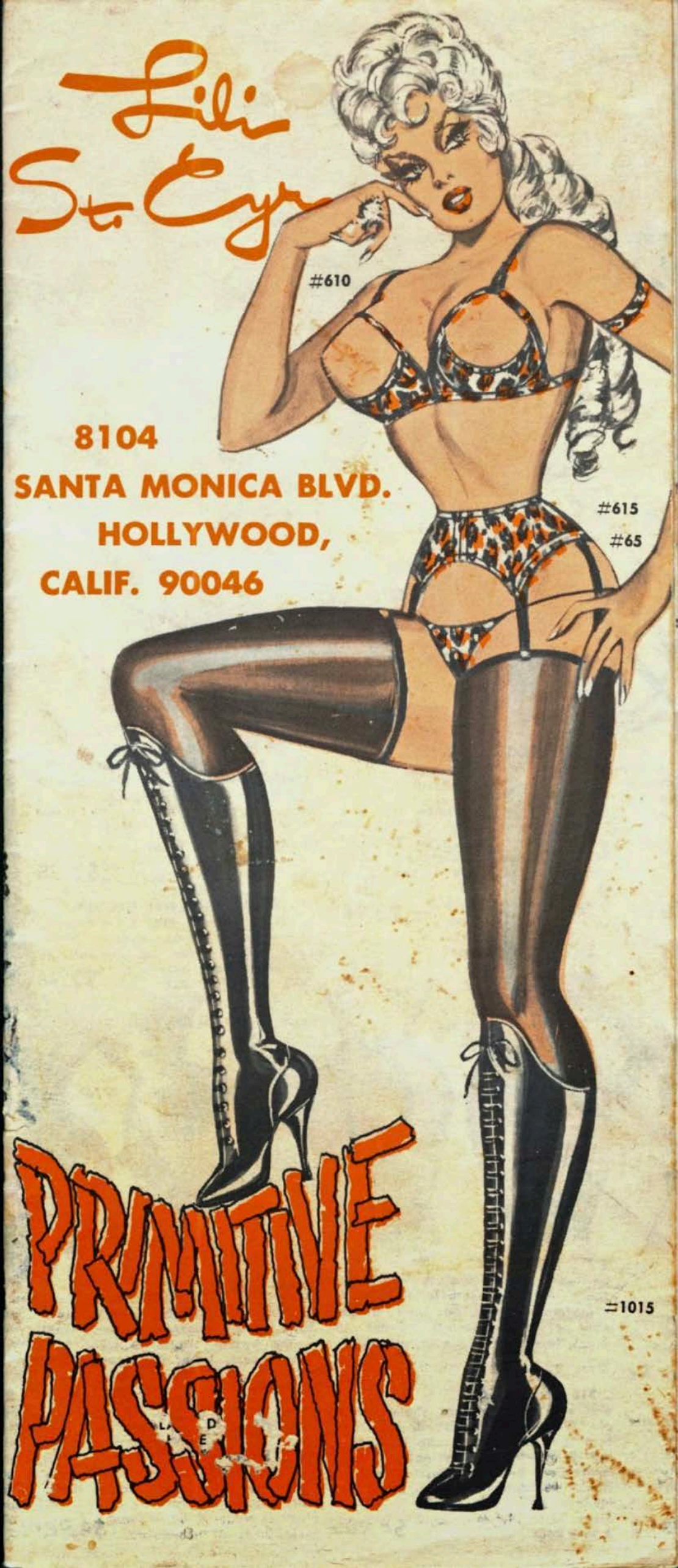
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Lili St. Cyr

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